

## FLORE.

-BY-

STANLEY J. WEYMAN.

Author of "A Gentleman of France."

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## SYNOPSIS.

Prosper is third secretary to the bishop of Beauvais, who, at the death of Louis XIV., becomes the rival of Cardinal Mazarin for the primacy of France and for the favor of Anne of Austria, the queen regent. By an error in copying Prosper leads the bishop to make an absurd error in stating the population of Paris to the council. Prosper is dismissed with a beating. He is reviled by the bishop's steward, whom he attacks in his rage, and is pursued through the streets of Paris. As he is escaping, he overhears another fugitive, who looks around in fear, and throws a bundle into Prosper's arms. Prosper staggers against a door in a wall, which opens, and his pursuers go by. He discovers that the bundle contains something alive, perhaps a stolen child. He determines to restore it, and claim a reward, but as he turns the end of the street, he is tripped up by another man who seizes the parcel and runs off. Prosper makes his way to the suburbs, and seeks refuge in a barn. On awakening, he finds near him the fugitive who tossed him the bundle. The latter is much cast down when he learns that he had given it up needlessly, but is evidently overjoyed when Prosper tells him that a famous man regained it, evidently recognizing a friend. Prosper has noticed a small case in the man's girdle, bearing the royal crown, and at once surmises that the infant king of France was being carried off. He and the stranger return to Paris, and Prosper takes note of a door at which the man lingers for a short time, before they separate. Prosper rushes off to the Palais Royal, where his young wife's father is head porter. His father-in-law recognizes him, and thinks his misfortune have turned his brain when he recounts his story of the stolen king. Prosper learns that it is the queen regent's pet spaniel, Flore, that has been stolen, and he hears the proclamation of a reward offered by his master, the bishop of Beauvais, for the dog's recovery. He returns to the door which he had marked, and enters an empty house surrounded by a garden. From a window he observes two gentlemen conversing with the ruffians of the previous night, and a handsome spaniel with them. One of the men starts for the house and sees Prosper at the window.

## PART IV.

Apparently he gave the alarm, for in an instant the eyes of all four were on me. I hung motionless in sheer surprise; then, as the lame man and his comrade started to the door in the wall, with the evident intention of engaging me, I flung the shutter close, and, cursing my curiosity, fled down the stairs. I had done better had I gone back to the window by which I had entered; for all below was dark, and at the foot of the staircase I stood, unable in my panic to remember the position of the door. A key grating in the lock told me that, but told it me too late. Almost on the instant the door flew open, a flood of light entered, a cry warned me that I was detected. I turned to go back, but stumbled before I had mounted six steps, and as I staggered up again



I FELT THE CLUTCH OF LONG FINGERS ON MY THROAT.

I felt a weight fall on my back and the clutch of long fingers close on my throat. I screamed, however, felt the fingers close in a deadly grip, cold and merciless—and then in sheer terror I swooned.

When I recovered my senses I found myself propped in a chair, and for a time wondering lazily where I was. In front of me a great door stood open, admitting a draught of summer air, and a flood of sunshine that fell even to my feet. Through the doorway I looked on grass and trees, and heard sparrows twitter, and the chirp of a cricket; and found all so peaceful that my mind went no farther, and it was only after some minutes that I recognized with a sharp return of terror that shook me to the soul that I was still in the hall of the empty house. That brought back other things, and with a shudder I carried my hand to my throat and tried to rise. A hand put me back and a dry voice said in my ear: "Be easy, M. Prosper. I am afraid that we put you to some inconvenience."

I looked dizzily at the speaker and recognized him for one of those I had seen in the garden. He had the air of a secretary—or as he stood rubbing his chin and looking down at me with a saturnine smile—of a physician. I read in his eyes something cold and not too human, yet it went no farther. His manner was suave and his voice, when he spoke again, as well calculated to reassure as his words were to surprise me.

"You are better now," he said. "Yes. Then I have to congratulate you. Few men, M. Prosper, few men, believe me, were ever so lucky. You were lately, I think, in the service of monseigneur the bishop of Beauvais, president of her majesty's council?"

I fancied that a faint note of irony lurked in his words. I kept silent.

"And yesterday were dismissed," he continued, easily disregarding my astonishment. "Well-to-day you shall be reinstated—and rewarded. Your business here, I believe, was to recover her majesty's dog?"

I remembered that the wretch whose finger marks were still on my throat might be within hearing, and I tried to utter a denial.

He waved it aside politely. "Just so," he said. "Well, the dog is in that closet, and in two conditions it is at your service."

## I CRIED MY ERRAND BEFORE THEM ALL.

He had a cloak would replace the one I had lost, a valet told me that my wife was gone to her father's, a second brought me food and nudged me to remember him, others ran and fetched me shoes and a cap; and all—all from the head clerk, who was most insistent, downwards, would know where the dog was.

But I had even then the sense to keep my secret, and would tell my story only to the bishop. He heard it; in ten minutes he was in his coach on his way to the house, taking me with him. His presence and the food they had given me had sobered me somewhat; and I trembled as we went along lest the villains had some disappointment yet in store for me, lest the closet be found empty. But a whine, growing into a howl, greeted us on the threshold, and the closet door being forced in a trice, the dog was amongst us.

Monseigneur clapped his hands and swore freely. "Dieu benisse!" he cried. "It is the dog sure enough! Here, Flore! Flore!" Then, as the dog jumped on us and licked his hand, he turned to me. "Lucky for you, my dear," he cried, in good humor. "There shall be fifty crowns in your pocket, and your desk again!"

I gasped. "But the reward, monseigneur?"

He bent his black brows. "Reward! You villain!" he thundered. "It is not enough that I spare you the gallows? Reward? For what do I pay you wages, do you think, except to do my work? And you ask reward besides? Go and hang yourself! Or rather," he continued, grimly, "strut at your peril. Look to him, Bonnavet, he is a rogue in grain; and bring him with me to the ante-chamber. Her majesty may desire to ask him questions, and if he an-

swer them, well! He shall still have the fifty crowns I promised him. If not—I shall know how to deal with him."

At that, and the reversal of all my hopes, I fell into my old rage again, and even his servants looked oddly at him, until a sharp word recalled them to their duty; on which they hustled me off with little ceremony, and the less for that which they had before showed me. While the bishop, carrying the dog in his arms, mounted his coach and went by the Rue St. Martin and St. Antoine, they hurried me by short cuts and byways to the Palais Royal, which we reached as his running footmen came in sight. The approach to the gate was blocked by a great crowd of people, and for a moment I was fond enough to imagine that they had to do with my affair—and I shrunk back. But the steward with a thrust of his knee against my hip, which showed me that he had not forgiven my blow, urged me forward, and from what passed round me as we pushed through the press, I gathered that a score of captured colors had arrived within the hour from Flanders, and were being presented to the queen.

The courtyard confirmed this, for the open part of it, and much pressed on by the curious who thronged the arcades, we found a troop of horse, plumed and mud-stained, fresh from the Flanders road. The officers who bore the trophies we overtook on the stairs near the door of the ante-chamber, turning with rage, as I was, and striving to the last patch of excitement, I yet remember that I thought it an odd time to push in with a dog; but monseigneur did not seem to see this. Whether he took a certain pleasure in belittling the war party, to whom he was opposed, or merely knew his ground well, he went on, thrusting the militaires aside with little ceremony; and as everyone was as quick to give place to him as he was to advance, in a moment we were in the ante-chamber.

I had never been admitted before, and from the doorway, within which I paused in Bonnavet's keeping, I viewed the scene with an interest that for the time overcame my sense of injustice. The long room hummed with talk; a crowd of churchmen and pages, with a sprinkling of the lesser nobility, many lawyers and some soldiers filled it from end to end. In one corner were a group of tradesmen, bearing plate for the queen's inspection; in another stood a knot of suitors with petitions; while everywhere men whose eager faces and expectant eyes were their best petitions, watched the farther door with quivering lips and sighs whenever it opened, and emitted merely a cough or a murmur. Several times a masked lady flitted through the crowd, with a bow here and a nod there, her taper fingers to the marmour of the throne without, mingling with the stir of talk within, seemed to fill up the light and color of the room.

Monseigneur, with his chaplain and pages at his shoulder, making in his stately way for the farther door, met M. de Chateaufort, and paused to speak. When he escaped from him a dozen elements, whose obsequious bows rendered evasion impossible, still delayed him; and I had grown cold, and hot again, and he was still on his progress when the inner door opened, half a dozen voices cried: "The queen!" and an usher with a silver wand passed down the room and ranked the company on either side—without without some struggling, and once a fierce oath, and twice a smothered outcry.

Of the bevy of ladies in attendance, only half a dozen entered, for a few paces within the doorway the queen stood still to receive my patron, who advanced to meet her. It seemed to me that she was not pleased to see him, and certainly her voice rang loud and peevishly as she cried: "What, my lord! Are you here? I came to receive the trophies from Blois, and did not expect to see you at this hour."

"I bring my own excuse, madame," he answered, unabashed. "Have I your majesty's leave to present it?" he continued, with a smile and a low bow.

"A came to receive the colors," she retorted, still frowning.

"I bring your majesty something equally to your liking," he replied.

Then I think she caught his meaning, for her proud, handsome face cleared wonderfully and she clapped her hands together with a gesture of pleasure almost childish. "What?" she exclaimed. "Have you—"

"Yes, madame," he said, smiling gallantly. "Bonnavet!"

But Bonnavet had watched his moment, and before the name fell clear of his master's lips was beside him, and with bent knee laid the dog tenderly at her majesty's feet. She uttered a cry of joy and stooped to caress it, her fair rings falling and hiding her face. On that I did not see exactly what happened, for her ladies flocked round her with cries that echoed hers, and all that reached me, where I stood by the door, took the form of excited cries of "Flore! Flore! Oh, the darling! and the like. A few old men who stood nearest the wall and farthest from the queen raised their eyebrows and the officers standing with the colors by the door were fallen faces; but nine-tenths of the crowd seemed to be fairly carried away by the queen's delight and congratulated one another as if ten Rocroys had been won.

Suddenly, while I hung in suspense, expecting each moment to be called forward, I heard a little stir at my elbow, and looking to the side, saw the not on the threshold break inward to—

—face, while several voices whispered: "Mazarin!" As I looked he came in, and pausing to speak to the foremost of the officers gave me the opportunity—which I had never enjoyed before—of viewing him near at hand; and in a moment it flashed upon me—though how I wore his cardinal's robes and then had been very simply dressed—that it was he whose back I had seen, and whose dazzling gown had blinded me in the garden!

The thought had scarcely grown to a conviction before he passed on, apologizing almost humbly to those whom he displaced and courteously to all; and this, and perhaps also the fact that the mass of those present belonged to my patron's party and were not quick to see him, rendered his progress so slow that, my name being called and everybody hustling me forward, I came face to face with the queen at the moment that he did, and saw—though for a while I was too much excited to un-

derstand—what passed. Her majesty, it seemed to me, did not look unkindly upon him. But the bishop was so full of his success and uplifted by the presence of his friends that he could not contain himself. "Hail the cardinal!" he cried; and, before the queen could speak, "I hope your eminence has been as zealous in her majesty's service as I have been."

"As zealous, assuredly," the cardinal answered, meekly. "As effective? Alas! it is not given to all to vie with your lordship in affairs."

But this—though I detected no smack of irony in the tone—did not seem to please the queen. "The bishop has done me a great service. He has recovered my dog," she said tartly.

"He is a happy man, and the happy must look to be envied," the cardinal answered gaily. "Your majesty's dog—"

"Your eminence never liked Flore!" the queen exclaimed.

"You never made a greater mistake, madame!" the cardinal answered with unusual emphasis. "Flore—but the dog is not here, I think."

"Your eminence is for once at a loss!" the bishop sneered; and at a word from him one of the ladies came forward, nursing the dog in her arms.

The cardinal looked. "Umph!" he said. And he looked again, frowning. I did not know then why the queen looked even of his looks; and I started when she cried pettishly: "Well, sir, what now?"

The cardinal pursed up his lips. "The bishop could bear it no longer. 'He will say presently,' he cried, snorting with indignation, 'that it is not the dog!'"

His eminence shrugged his shoulders very slightly, and turned the palms of his hands outwards. "Oh," he said, "if her majesty is satisfied."

"M'dieu!" the queen cried angrily. "What do you mean?" But she turned to the lady who held the dog, and took it from her. "It is the dog!" she said.

"Do you think that I do not know my own dog?" Flore! Flore! And she set the dog on its feet. It turned to her and wagged its tail eagerly.

"Flore! Flore!" said the cardinal. "Flore!" it went to him.

"Certainly its name is Flore," he continued, sulkily. "But it used to die, at the word of command, I think?"

"What did it, will do?" M. de Beauvais cried scornfully. "But I see that your eminence was right in one thing you said."

The cardinal bowed. "That I should be envied!" the bishop continued with a sneer. And he glanced round the circle. There was a general titter; a great lady at the queen's elbow laughed out.

"Flore," said the queen, "die! die, good dog. Do you hear, m'dieu! die!" But the dog only gazed into her face and wagged its tail; and though she cried to it again and angrily, it made no attempt to obey. On which a deep-drawn breath ran round the circle; one looked at another; a score of heads

were thrust forward, and some who had seemed merry enough the moment before looked grave as mutes now. "It used to bark for France, and growl for Spain!" the cardinal continued in his softest voice. "Perhaps—"

"France!" the queen cried harshly; and she stamped on the floor. "France! France!"

But the dog only retreated, cowering and dismayed; and at a distance wagged its tail pitifully.

"France!" cried the queen desperately. "I am afraid, my lord, that it has lost its accomplishments—in your company!" the cardinal said, a faint smile curling his lips.

The bishop let drop a smothered oath. "It is the dog!" he cried passionately.

But the queen turned to him sharply, her face crimson. "I do not agree with you!" she replied. "And more, my lord," she continued with vehemence; "I should be glad if you would explain how you came into possession of this dog—and yet not my dog—could not be found in a moment nor without some foul contrivance."

"It has forgotten its tricks," the bishop said.

"Nonsense!" the queen retorted. "A great many faces had grown grave by this time. I have said that the room was filled for the most part with bishop's supporters. 'At any rate,' I know nothing about it. That man found it!" he exclaimed.

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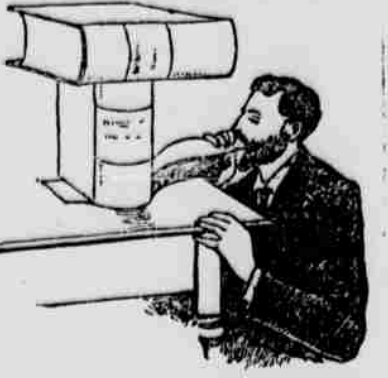
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## CHILDREN'S COLUMN.

## POWER IN THE BREATH.

A Simple Experiment Which Illustrates the Force of the Lungs.

Everybody is familiar with that little trick of filling a paper bag with air from the mouth and then making it explode



with a report like that of a pistol, but very few people know how great a force may be exerted in this way.

Here is an experiment that any one may make, and the result is so surprising to those that have never attempted it that it is well worth attention.

Get a long, narrow bag of strong paper and lay it flat on the edge of the table, with the mouth toward you. Then lay weights upon the bag, gradually increasing, and blow into it, and you will be astonished at how much your breath will lift. After a little practice—and the practice will help to expand your lungs and chest—you may easily upset two big books like the city directory.

## The Collett Boy's Adventure.

Going to school in the far northwest is attended sometimes with the possibility of rare adventures. In the valley of the North river, in Chehalis county, Wash., not only bears, but cougars, are very common. A newspaper of that section relates that the little son of Presley Collett, 7 years old, who lives about a mile from the village of Arlie, went to the postoffice on his way home from school.

This was a fortunate proceeding for the little Collett boy, for at the postoffice Roden Wade's dog came up to him. The dog knew him, and the little Collett boy patted him on the head, and the result was that the dog followed the boy on his way home.

As the little fellow was trudging along the lonely road, with the dog a trifle in advance, he felt something snatching and nibbling at his trousers. He looked around and saw a great, savage animal following and crouching behind him.

It was a cougar, and a very large one at that. The child uttered a fearful shriek, jumped ahead, as if he had been shot, and ran down the road as fast as his small legs could carry him.

Meantime the dog came back and attacked the cougar ferociously. He was a small dog and not for a moment a match for the cougar, and spite of a noble struggle was quickly torn to pieces. But his attack detained the cougar long enough to enable the flying boy to get a considerable distance down the road.

Here he came across William Valentine, 17 years old. William ran into his house and got a gun and came back after the cougar. Any Chehalis county boy of 17 is a good shot, and Valentine, as soon as he caught sight of the cougar tearing and eating the dog, aimed a shot at the animal, which ended its life.

The cougar measured a little over 6 feet from tip to tip. He was undoubtedly having made a meal of the Collett boy if the dog had not offered himself for that purpose.—Youth's Companion.

## A Funny Dentist.

Gracie had a loose tooth. "That tooth must come out!" said her mamma. "Oh, no!" cried Gracie. "It'll hurt!"

"Because pretty soon another little tooth will come pushing along behind it," went on mamma, "and I want it to come straight and even. Let mamma pull this one for you, dear."

"Oh, no!" cried the little girl again, and she put her hand tight over her mouth and ran out to play in the yard.

Pretty soon Uncle Ed swung the gate open. He always had something in his pocket for Gracie. This time it was a big sweet apple. "But you must ask your mamma if you can eat it," said he.

Mamma said "Yes," and the little one sat down by the window to eat her apple. It was a very sweet apple, and Gracie enjoyed it very much. All at once she saw a little cry.

"Why—why—here's a bone in my apple, mamma, sure's you live!"

"Oh, I guess not," said mamma. "I guess it's a seed."

"No," persisted Gracie. "It's just as white and hard, mamma."

A twinkle came into mamma's eye at that. "Let me see it," she said. "Go and look in your mouth, dear," she said.

"Oh, mamma," cried Gracie, "there's a hole come where my tooth was! Why, oh, did the apple pull it, mamma?"

But mamma only laughed.—Our Little Ones.

## Sissy's Effort.

"Now, Sissy Thompson, show those great big boys that you can read writing just as well as they, even if you are so small!"

Sissy (slowly)—This is—a—warm—doughnut. Tread—on—it—Life.

## The Jumping Coin.

The ease with which a coin can be made to move by a current of air is greater than most people suppose. If you lay a penny on a polished table and, holding a penny behind to keep the air in, blow smartly on the table, the penny will jump and dance about.—London Tit-Bits.

## Jimmy's Queer Question.

Mother—But the candy box is 'most empty, dear.

Jimmy—How full of empty is it?—Youth's Companion.

## The Ideal Panacea.

James L. Francis, Alderman, Chicago, says: "I regard Dr. King's New Discovery as an ideal Panacea for Coughs, Colds and Lung complaints, having used it for years for the relief of my family. The exclusion of physicians' prescriptions or other preparations."

Rev. John Burgess, Keokuk, Iowa, writes: "I have been a member of the Methodist Episcopal Church for 50 years or more, and have never found anything so beneficial, or that gave me such speedy relief as Dr. King's New Discovery. Try this Ideal Cough Remedy now. Trial Bottles Free at Churchills & Co. John's successors to Geo. L. La Fontaine & Co.

Headaches cannot be cured, not relieved. Neu-Rol cures.

## TANK'S LUCK.

(Copyright, 1895.)

Tank Peart was one of the best fish jugs on the Missouri, and no invidious suggestion respecting his habits is covered by that statement. Tank was simply a familiar abbreviation of his baptismal name, Tancred, and catfish are caught in western waters by "jugging." He lived some 20 miles above Alton, on the Missouri side of the river, and used to send down, by the river boats, to that city and St. Louis his catch of fish, doing quite a good business in the season.

That fact is perhaps of little interest to anybody but himself, however, and is only incidentally mentioned as the basis of circumstance out of which grew a very singular illustration of the queer ways Dame Fortune sometimes takes to befriending a man when he is in a good humor.

Tank deserved credit for going out "jugging" one particular morning three or four years ago, for the way he went through a sense of duty—to get some catfish he had promised to send down to an Alton hotel—when he didn't feel a bit like doing that or anything else but sleep. He had been "sitting up" very late the night before with Almina Lightfoot, doing his best to win her reluctant consent to becoming Mrs. Tank Peart.

A month before he thought he had her safe enough, but the storekeeper at the crossroads had not then brought down his wife's brother, Bob Mather, from Chicago, to clerk for him.

Bob was a drowsy, good looking, sprightly young fellow, "a right smart, clever chap," as Tank fairly recognized, and in all probability not at all responsible for Almina's wayward fancy, but the fact existed, all the same, that since his advent she had grown cold to her former lover. The question of the matter was, did he get home from sleeping when he got home that night was whether it would be altogether just or quite pious to "lam the life out" of a Bob. He had not yet determined it when gray dawn appeared, and, hopeless of rest, he arose and went out on the river with his "jugging."

Paddling to a favorite bend where the current was sluggish, he set afloat a dozen gallon jugs, empty and tightly corked, to the handle of each of which was attached a short line carrying a big hook baited with pork, and as they slowly drifted down the stream he kept his eyes on them. They did not seem to be hungry, for in a long time no jug bobbed. The sun was hot, and Tank dropped into a doze.

Suddenly he awoke to find four of the jugs performing violent antics, darting aimlessly to and fro, or making frantic efforts, seemingly, to escape after their force. One sailed off down stream, like a racer, a second went skittering away toward the Illinois shore and the others appeared to be struggling to effect a mutual smash. The fish down below were not only hungry now, but active. Naturally Tank addressed himself to the catching business first. Learning too far over the edge of his light skiff to catch the lines holding the fish and being only half awake physically as yet, he overbalanced and plunged headforemost deep down in the river.

When he arose to the surface, the skiff was some yards away from the spot where he had fallen, and going much too fast for him to overtake, since he was not a particularly good swimmer. Giving it up with a broadly comprehensive anathema upon things in general, he turned to swim ashore and was dismayed at seeing how far out he had drifted.

He struggled soon his breath came hard and panting, his water soaked clothing was dragging him down, and he realized that he was in great danger of drowning. He tried floating on his back, but was overtopped by his clothes and boots. Then he lost his head and began splashing excitedly and vainly. The sight of it so shocked him that he came near letting go again and sinking. It was a coffin!

For the moment Tank's mind was not quite clear as to whether he was really floating alongside a coffin or was already drowned and inside the greswome box. Luckily for him, his muscles held on, though his brain let go and in a few moments more he grew able to think. Then he understood the situation and realized that it was not so extraordinary after all.

The Missouri river amuses itself by constantly eating away its banks on one side and depositing them on the other, so that its channel that old pilots declare the only safe rule for navigating it is to "go one season where you couldn't go the season before." In this process of erosion it often carries away graveyards, the coffins from which generally sink before floating far. But this one, Tank noticed, rode high, as if it were sound, water tight and lightly laden. Somehow an impression gained upon him that it was untenanted.

He managed to climb aboard, and with a leg dangling on each side steered it to a low sand bar, where by good luck his skiff had landed, and he found his boat. He felt himself master of the situation, and with fully regained confidence and the aid of a hatchet that he carried in the skiff to kill catfish proceeded to investigate his mysterious raft. It had been carefully calked, its joints filled with tar, its screw heads sunk and painted, its outside coated with this with this paint. Prudent men have had themselves buried in asbestos coffins, but such precautions against damage by water seemed extraordinary. With excited hope—though he did not know what he hoped for—Tank wielded his hatchet.

He found, carefully wrapped in paper and securely packed, two armfuls of solid silverware and a bag containing over \$1,000 in gold coin! Neither upon the silver, nor the paper, nor anywhere else, was there any mark of ownership. Doubtless the treasure had been buried somewhere up the river by some one of the secret kind from the hand of war years before.

Tank found no difficulty in disposing of the silverware in St. Louis for a sum he never precisely stated, though more, as he admitted, than the amount of coin he had found—enough at all events to establish him in popular estimation as a very rich citizen. And Almina Lightfoot, contemplating him from that point of view, readily perceived that she had, all the time, thought much more of him than of Bob Mather and was quite willing to become his wife.

## An Empress Clock.

The empress of Russia has a carriage clock of tortoise shell, mounted in gold, having the handle encrusted with diamonds, and above the dial the imperial crown in brilliant, with the initial "A" below it, also worked in brilliant. This clock was given to the Princess Alix upon her marriage by English ladies residing in St. Petersburg.

## The Scrub Brush.

Fasten a piece of tape or string to the end of your scrubbing brush, so that when finished with it, it can be hung up and allowed to drain. The string will slip into the back and loosening the bristles and making them soft. For the same reason, do not leave the brush in the pail of water when the floor is being scrubbed.

Headaches cannot be cured, not relieved. Neu-Rol cures.

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